

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
September 19, 2016
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Joseph M. Butler, Jr. Presiding

Present: Council Member Cody J. Horbacz
Council Member Stephen A. Jennings
Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso
Council Member Mark C. Walczyk
Mayor Butler

Also Present: Sharon Addison, City Manager
Robert J. Slye, City Attorney

City staff present: Fire Chief Herman, Deputy Fire Chief Randall, Michael Lumbis, Jen Voss, Justin Wood, Shawn McWayne, Eugene Hayes, Vicky Murphy

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Support of The Hidden Heroes Campaign
- Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Change Order #1 and Change Order #2 for Fire Department Pumper Truck, Colden Enterprises
- Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Bid for Trailer-Mounted Trash Pump, Xylem Dewatering Solutions, Inc.
- Resolution No. 4 - Sponsoring and Supporting an Application For Restore NY Funding
- Public Hearing - Restore NY Grant Application
- Public Hearing - Community Development Block Grant Program Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)
- Public Hearing - A Local Law Adopting Chapter 177 of the Code of the City of Watertown Entitled Rental Properties
- Laid Over Under the Rules - An Ordinance Amending Various Provisions of the Code of the City of Watertown to allow for the Establishment of a Schedule of Fees to be Approved Annually by the Watertown City Council
- Resolution - Establishing City Fees and Charges Schedule
- NYSDOH Drinking Water Fluoridation Contract
- Return of the Watertown Bucks for the 2017 Season
- NYS Retirement System 2018 Employer Contribution Rates
- Sales of Surplus Hydro-electricity – August 2016
- Sales Tax Revenue – August 2016

Complete Reports on file in the office of the City Clerk

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of September 6, 2016 and work session of September 12, 2016, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Stephen A. Jennings, seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from NYABSuperFund discussing their reactions to the latest communications from the DEC regarding the cleanup of contamination from NY Airbrake and suggesting the formation of a community advisory group.

An email was received from Lynne Bates regarding the proposed rental registration program. She stated there are a few things that could be advantageous but suggested Council consider some modifications to it as well.

Above communications were placed on file in the office of the City Clerk.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Patricia Whalen, 231 Franklin Street, informed Council that she will be mailing the first packet of petitions regarding bed bugs to Senator Charles Schumer, Senator Kristen Gillibrand, Congresswoman Elise Stefanik and Governor Andrew Cuomo. She stated there is more infestation and the problem is getting worse.

Irish Cornaire, 716 Gotham Street, addressed the chair regarding a possible dog park and read from a prepared statement (on file in the City Clerk's Office). She listed her reasons for supporting a dog park within Thompson Park.

S. G. Gates, 157 Dorsey Street, explained to Council that he began approaching the City regarding a dog park on March 8, 2007, and said he feels dog owners are being discriminated against. He stressed that Thompson Park was a gift to the City for the citizens' enjoyment, noting one-third of the City's population are dog owners. Mr. Gates indicated that he was told by Reverend Fred Garry, Friends of Thompson Park, that there would not be a problem as long as the dog park keeps with the spirit of the park.

Joshua Velasquez, 23173 Kitto Marina Drive, Dexter, addressed the chair regarding the staff report from Parks and Recreation Superintendent Erin Gardner and her recommendation to not enter into a contract with the Watertown Bucks for the 2017 season. He stated he was an intern with the Watertown Bucks and his role was Assistant General Manager. Noting that he disagreed with some of the issues brought forward by Ms. Gardner, he explained the team's position regarding the bathroom and locker room conditions, lighting for the clubhouse, washer, trash pickup and several incidents between the team and City staff. He stated the City had no interest in having this team from the beginning. He also pointed out that the outfield wall was not in good condition and was falling apart, noting it was difficult to hang signs.

Tracy Almasy, 114 High Street, addressed the chair stating she is concerned with the homeless problem within the City and suggested a taskforce be formed to look into it.

Jason White, 250 Rexford Place, thanked Council Members, noting there are a lot of decisions that they need to make which are not always popular, and thanked the public for attending this meeting, noting he

hopes more will attend on a regular basis. He mentioned he recently talked to people that grew up here but had not visited in many years, and he noted he heard comments that the City looked to be on the decline. He challenged anyone that speaks in disagreement with what Council is doing to offer ideas or thoughts on how to make this City great and help to solve the problems.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:30 p.m. Mayor Butler asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning the City's application for Restore NY Grant funding on behalf of the proposed project at the Masonic Temple building

Mayor Butler declared the hearing open at 7:30 p.m.

No one spoke.

Mayor Butler declared the hearing closed at 7:30 p.m.

At 7:31 p.m. Mayor Butler asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning the City's Draft Program Year 2015 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) for the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

Mayor Butler declared the hearing open at 7:31 p.m.

Michael Lumbis, Planning and Community Development Director, explained this is one of the two required public hearings for the City's CDBG Program and it coincides with the submission of the annual performance report to HUD. He indicated the draft report was published on September 2, 2016, and it has been available for public review in various places throughout the community. He highlighted several accomplishments that were done within the 2015 Program Year.

Mayor Butler declared the hearing closed at 7:34 p.m.

At 7:34 p.m. Mayor Butler asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning a Local Law adopting Chapter 177 of the Code of the City of Watertown Entitled Rental Properties

Mayor Butler declared the hearing open at 7:34 p.m.

Council Member Jennings provided the public with a presentation (on file in the City Clerk's Office) of the local law in order to provide a better understanding of his proposed program. He showed a map of the seven US Census Tracts making up Watertown and pointed out the areas with the most distressed housing, as well as the age of all housing in the City by census tract. He summarized that 57% of the City's housing stock was built prior to 1940. He stressed that significantly more people rent than own, noting there are 7,575 units which comprises 60.3% of all the housing in the City. Mentioning he researched the proactive models of other cities in New York State, Council Member Jennings indicated that adopting this program will change the emphasis from an enforcement-driven, punitive approach to prevention and maintenance and good stewardship of all of our City neighborhoods. He highlighted that the program will address the absentee landlord problem by requiring the designation of a managing

agent for properties where the owner neither resides nor does business in Jefferson County and it delineates the responsibilities of the tenants. He stressed this is not punitive toward good landlords and it is a proactive enforcement of existing State law and code that all landlords must already comply with. He reviewed the exceptions under the proposal, noting these are under other regulator control or inspection process. He explained the implementation timeline starting on January 1, 2018, noting this allows property owners to prepare and allows budget planning for the City. He informed Council of the benefits of this program and addressed the misconceptions, stressing this is not illegal and it does not violate the 4th Amendment rights.

Alan Walts, 418 Clay Street, informed Council he has been a private homeowner, real estate investor, landlord and for the past ten years, tenant. He said he is opposed to this program feeling it violates his rights under the 4th Amendment. In addition, he stated it protects owners that occupy single-family dwellings as well as special interest landlords from the City inspections.

Gary Walts, addressed the chair stating he is a landlord and suggested the registration is not necessary because the City tax roll should already contain the information regarding the owner and property.

Valerie Fuller, 300 South Meadow Street, mentioned she is a renter and said landlords hold renters accountable by having signed leases, collecting deposits and doing their own inspections. She questioned what protects the renter and ensures their safety, noting there are absentee landlords. She pointed out that if there are no problems with the property, this program will run smoothly but if there are problems, this program will address them. She indicated that she supports this measure.

Kay Plante, 608 Water Street, stated she is a landlord and approximately 35% of her housing is inspected by another entity. Stressing she is on call 24 hours a day, she said she tells her tenants that she wants to know when there are issues. She said she is against a stranger coming into any of her tenants' homes, even if it is by appointment, and stated that she inspects her units at least once a month. She discussed the bedbug problem and suggested using steam to combat them.

Chris Ebey, 115 South Pearl Avenue, indicated that she is a professional at Jefferson Community College (JCC) and she strongly supports this measure. Noting she had lived in many areas which had a rental registration program, she described what it was like moving to this area without a housing inspection and the terrible conditions in which she lived under in her first apartment. She said she is worried about her students and the places that they might be renting.

Karen Gerkin, 328 Butterfield Avenue, informed Council that she is a landlord, business owner and homeowner within the City. She noted there are laws on the books currently in which landlords need to follow and stressed those need to be enforced instead of creating more laws. She said she does not want the good landlords penalized because they do try to do a good job with their properties. In addition, she said she does not want to pay additional charges to register the properties.

Aileen Martin, 36788 Route 12E, Clayton, said she works at Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL) as well as owns two rental properties in Cape Vincent. Stressing there are a lot of great landlords in the room tonight, she said she appreciates the work that they do to maintain their properties, but she also hears stories from her clients of what can happen when properties are not reviewed by someone, whether it be the City or some other entity. She mentioned situations in which the landlords collect rent when the house has been foreclosed on or the house is not set up to be a multi-rental unit,

noting there are a lot of untrustworthy landlords. She said she thinks this is a fine proposal in which good landlords will not be penalized and she supports the program.

Barbara Parks, 1111 Academy Street, submitted photographs (on file in the City Clerk's Office) of rental properties in her neighborhood that have holes in the roof and windows. She stated she is strongly in support of the law because there are absentee landlords that take advantage of people.

Ruby Jordan, 314 Vanduzee Street, indicated she is a landlord and commented that Code Enforcement should be called for conditions such as the ones in the photos that the previous speaker submitted. Noting there is 60% of rentals in the City, she questioned how many were absentee landlords or large corporations receiving tax incentives. She questioned who would pay for this new program as well as the two to three new employees and software that would be needed to administrate it. She reiterated that safety issues should be addressed with Code Enforcement.

S. G. Gates, 157 Dorsey Street, remarked that he applauds Council Member Jennings for trying to do something for this community and there is an issue with zombie properties. Noting there have been staff cuts in other City departments, he said his only concern is the cost of this program.

Adam Brown, 614 Gotham Street, advised that he currently has fifteen rental units in the City and is against the proposal. He said it is the responsibility of the tenants and the surrounding property owners to report anything that is wrong with the rental property. He noted there should be more staff in Code Enforcement to help alleviate the issues.

Ricky Frazier, 23460 White Road, said he has many rental units and that he is for and against this plan. He said everyone should all share in the responsibility of making Watertown beautiful, not just the landlords. He discussed the fees imposed on the landlords and mentioned that the tenants should have a fee as well. He discussed the responsibilities of the tenants and after describing his experience with the court system, he said he feels no one stands up for the landlord. He suggested the problem might be that there are some really bad tenants.

Jeremy Briggs, 422 Harris Drive, advised this law will be a burden on himself and his property management company. He suggested this will cost him more for the property management service, noting that his margin has already been affected by all the new apartment complexes that have been built recently. He also said this law does not address the cause of the problem and pointed out that the number of apartments has increased due to the subsidies given to the new complexes and that many absentee landlords are renting their house because the market is down so they could not sell it when they moved away. Lastly, he discussed the fines to tenants and said he does not want the City to come into his apartments and fine his tenants.

Pat Henry, 524 Holcomb Street, mentioned there have been 850 units built in Jefferson County in the last few years which caused people to move outside the City to newer apartments. He concluded that the people left in Watertown do not have the means to live outside the City because they use the City bus or have to walk to where they need to go. In addition, he questioned the staffing that would be needed to inspect all the units in Watertown and said there should not be any exceptions because being in real estate, he hear complaints regarding Watertown Housing as well.

Gary Beasley, 23524 Fetterly Road, Dexter, stated he works with Neighbors of Watertown which owns and manages many rental properties. He commented that rental housing is a business and they should be under the same regulations and requirements as any other business. He stated that the landlords hold the health and safety of their tenant in their control and it is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. He noted that his units are inspected heavily by HUD. He advised that at a minimum the registration portion should be put in place and discussed the benefits of having that data, especially for housing funding.

Cary Derrigo, 218 Thompson Boulevard, stated he supports this and agrees with Mr. Beasley. He said if this law is not passed, then he would like to hear a proposal from the Council Members that voted against it in order to address the problem that exists.

Russell Randall, 150 Charles Street, commented that there are two issues: blight control and rental property safety. He discussed the inspections that were done by the Fire Department from 1946 to 2011 and suggested that process be implemented again.

Karen Gerkin, 328 Butterfield Avenue, questioned how the City would gain access to the rental properties, noting that most tenants and property owners work fulltime jobs. She said this will be a burden on the property owner.

John Doldo, III, 439 Harris Drive, indicated that he is opposed to the rental registration and inspection program, noting that the issues brought up are legitimate and this is not the way to fix it. Mentioning that he was on a committee when this was discussed in previous years, he said the purpose of this program would make it easier for government to take title to private property and in his view that is wrong. He also said he does not believe that Code Enforcement should be able to enter someone's home. He offered a better solution to the problem would be to get different pieces of government to work together to address the problem.

Howard Sprague, 1409 Ives Street, said he is a landlord and stated he meets with everyone prior to renting the unit, stressing the importance of getting to know the individual first. He asked what the landlord will get out of the charges and said he feels this is just another tax. He commented that he is against this proposal.

Chris Ebey, 115 South Pearl Avenue, addressed Council again stating that the reason she rented her first apartment sight unseen was because she had done it previously without problems in areas that had rental inspection programs.

Ryan Henry-Wilkinson, 520 Holcomb Street, said he is against this program based on privacy grounds, but he supports what Council Member Jennings is trying to accomplish. He questioned the qualifications needed to be a property manager.

Kevin Parks, 1111 Academy Street, indicated he supports this because it is progressive and encouraged Council to take the time to educate the landlords that will be affected by it. He noted this has been replicated in hundreds of cities across the country with success.

Hoseah Njuguna, 25583 James Street, said he is a former soldier and real estate agent. He stated he does not think this proposal will solve anything that Code Enforcement does not already do and it is redundant.

Mayor Butler declared the hearing closed at 8:50 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Support of The Hidden Heroes Campaign

Introduced by Council Member Stephen A. Jennings

WHEREAS the series of wars in which our nation has been engaged over time since World War II, has resulted in 5.5 million military and veteran caregivers who are parents, spouses, siblings and friends, caring for those wounded, ill or injured who have served our nation, as documented by the 2014 Rand study commissioned by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, and

WHEREAS the daily tasks of these military and veterans caregivers can include bathing, feeding, dressing and caring for the grievous injuries of wounded warriors, administering medications, providing emotional support, caring for the family and the home, and working outside the home to earn essential income, and

WHEREAS the nation provides multi-faceted support to our wounded, ill and injured veterans and service members through public, private and philanthropic resources, but their caregivers receive little support or acknowledgement, and

WHEREAS most military and veteran caregivers consider the challenging work they do as simply carrying out their civic and patriotic duty, without realizing they are, in fact, caregivers, and do not identify themselves as such, and

WHEREAS an alarming number of military and veteran caregivers, according to research, are suffering numerous debilitating mental, physical and emotional effects as a result of their caregiving duties, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown desires to recognize and support those who are serving in these vital roles in our own community,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown as follows:

1. That the City of Watertown become a Hidden Heroes City in support of military and veteran caregivers.
2. That the City of Watertown seek to identify military and veteran caregivers residing in our City.
3. That the City of Watertown work to ensure that our government, organizations, employers and non-profits are aware of the unique challenges of military and veteran caregivers and are encouraged to create supportive environments and opportunities for

assistance.

4. That the City of Watertown plan an observance each May, during Military Appreciation Month, to honor and recognize the City's military and veteran caregivers in partnership with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's national Hidden Heroes campaign.
5. That the City of Watertown encourage all who care for and support veterans and service members to extend that support to their caregivers.
6. That the City of Watertown designate a point of contact for our City ***as the City Manager, ~~from the public or private sector,~~** for citizens and organizations wanting to offer support, and caregivers who need that support.

Seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Butler stated this resolution was at his request because he was approached by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation asking for the City's support for this campaign. He explained this campaign was started in order to recognize and support individuals that take care of veterans.

Council Member Walczyk applauded Mayor Butler for bringing this forward.

Motion was made by Mayor Joseph M. Butler, Jr. to amend the foregoing resolution in order to appoint the City Manager as the point of contact. Motion was seconded by Council Member Cody J. Horbacz and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Change Order #1 and Change Order #2 for Fire Department Pumper Truck, Colden Enterprises

Introduced by Council Member Stephen A. Jennings

WHEREAS on September 8, 2015, City Council accepted the bid from Colden Enterprises in the amount of \$469,529 for a Pumper Truck for use by the City of Watertown Fire Department per our specifications, and

WHEREAS on December 21, 2015, City Council approved Change Order "A" in the amount of \$2,385.98, and

WHEREAS Colden Enterprises has now submitted Change Order #1 in the amount of \$1,115 for necessary components, and

WHEREAS Colden Enterprises has also submitted Change Order #2 in the amount of \$1,364.75 for additional components,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council that it hereby accepts Change Order #1 submitted by Colden Enterprises in the amount of \$1,115, as well as Change Order #2 in the amount of \$1,364.75 as listed on the attached Change Orders bringing the total amount to \$474,394.73, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City Manager Sharon Addison is hereby authorized and directed to sign all documents necessary with accepting Change Order #1 and Change Order #2 on behalf of the City.

Seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Walczyk questioned this amount wondering if it could be done in-house at a lower cost.

Dale Herman, Fire Chief, explained this is two lights that will have a manual switch at the back of the vehicle as well as being tied into when the vehicle is put into reverse.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Bid for Trailer-Mounted Trash Pump, Xylem Dewatering Solutions, Inc.

Introduced by Council Member Stephen A. Jennings

WHEREAS the City Purchasing Department has advertised and received sealed bids for the purchase of one new and unused 6" Trailer-Mounted Trash Pump for use by the Waste Water Treatment Plant, and

WHEREAS bid invitations were sent to six (6) prospective bidders, with three (3) sealed bids submitted to the Purchasing Department, and

WHEREAS on Thursday, September 8, 2016, at 11:00 a.m., the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS City Purchasing Manager Amy M. Pastuf reviewed the bids received with Chief Operator Mark Crandall, and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the bid submitted by Xylem Dewatering Solutions, Inc.,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown accepts the bid of Xylem Dewatering Solutions, Inc., in the amount of \$39,895 for the purchase of one new and unused 6" Trailer-Mounted Trash Pump for use by the Waste Water Treatment Plant as the lowest qualified bidder meeting our specifications, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City Manager Sharon Addison is hereby authorized and directed to sign all contracts associated with implementing the award to Xylem Dewatering Solutions, Inc.

Seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 4 - Sponsoring and Supporting an Application For Restore NY Funding

Introduced by Council Member Stephen A. Jennings

WHEREAS the City of Watertown is eligible for grant funding under Round 4 of the Restore NY Communities Initiative Municipal Grant Program, and

WHEREAS the City Council has considered proposals that qualify for funding under the program and selected one project to be included in an application that will be submitted to the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) as follows:

Rehabilitation of the Masonic Temple Building located at 242 Washington Street, Parcel Number 10-06-128.000, to include the restoration of the façade and interior renovations to the basement level of the building, and

WHEREAS this project is consistent with all existing local plans, the proposed financing is appropriate for the project, the project will facilitate effective and efficient use of existing and future public resources so as to promote both economic development and preservation of community resources and the project develops and enhances infrastructure and/or other facilities in a manner that will attract, create and sustain employment opportunities in the City of Watertown,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council hereby supports and will sponsor an application for Restore NY funding for the Masonic Temple Project and will administer the grant in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations established by ESDC, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is authorized to sign the application and any agreements required by ESDC for grant funding that results from the application.

Seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Walczyk asked if the Lincoln Building could still be moved forward if something were to happen with the Masonic Temple.

Ms. Addison confirmed that it could be but noted the Masonic Temple is meeting every deadline.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.

OLD BUSINESS

A Local Law Adopting Chapter 177 of the Code of the City of Watertown Entitled Rental Properties. *(Introduced on 8/15/2016; public hearing held this evening; appears in its entirety in the 2016 Minutes Book on page 15-16 of the 8/15/2016 minutes).*

Laid over under the rules

An Ordinance Amending Various Provisions of the Code of the City of Watertown to Allow for the Establishment of a Schedule of Fees to be Approved Annually by the Watertown City Council. *(Introduced on 9/6/2016; laid over under the rules; appears in its entirety in the 2016 Minutes Book on page 4-9 of the 9/6/2016 minutes).*

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing ordinance and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution - Establishing City Fees and Charges Schedule

Introduced by Council Member Stephen A. Jennings

WHEREAS City Council desires to establish a City Fees and Charges Schedule for the City of Watertown for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 by resolution, as authorized by Local Law No. 2 of 2016, and

WHEREAS various provisions of the Code of the City of Watertown, currently dispersed throughout the City Code, will be established annually by the City Council of the City of Watertown through a budget resolution that adopts a “City Fees and Charges Schedule,” and

WHEREAS the various sections of the City Code of the City of Watertown, which had been previously established fees by ordinance, has been repealed,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby adopts the City Fees and Charges Schedule attached and made a part of this Resolution for FY 2016-2017.

Seconded by Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Horbacz noted the fees were discussed at length during the budget process and nothing new is included in this.

Mayor Butler explained the process that this is accomplishing and noted it allows for the fees to be reviewed collectively once a year.

Council Member Walczyk asked if the usage of City versus out of City users could be tracked for things such as public skating. He mentioned there have been some concerns that the fees are a deterrent to doing business with the City so he would like to see the data.

Mayor Butler said the City can always make adjustments based on feedback but when \$10 million is spent on a new Arena there needs to be a mechanism in place to generate some revenue.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.

STAFF REPORTS

Sales of Surplus Hydro-electricity – August 2016

Mayor Butler reviewed the report and noted the sale of surplus hydro-electric power on an actual to actual basis was up \$226,808 or 2,260.14% in comparison to August 2015. He added the year-to-date actual revenue is up \$19,082 or 5.72% while the year-to-date revenue on a budget basis is down \$26,191 or 6.92%.

Council Member Walczyk asked if a lot of water was sold to municipalities or farmers in the area due to the drought season.

Sales Tax Revenue – August 2016

Mayor Butler indicated that in comparison to the original budget projection for the month of August, sales tax was down \$143,354 or 9.08% so on a budgetary basis, the City is down approximately \$200,000. He said at this pace, the forecast will be a \$1.2 million loss of sales tax revenue which puts tremendous pressure on determining what to budget for next year.

Return of the Watertown Bucks for the 2017 Season

Mayor Butler read the memo from Superintendent Gardner recommending that the City not enter into a contract with the Watertown Bucks for the 2017 season.

Ms. Addison reported this was an ongoing challenge for management throughout the season and noted it was a one year contract with the potential for renewal if the team acted accordingly. She said she received pictures of neglected bathrooms and there was damage to locker rooms, as well as abuse of the Parks and Recreation's staff. She stressed the message that she received is not consistent with the comments that Council heard earlier under Privilege of the Floor. She relayed that management met with the team several times and they were made aware of this recommendation.

Council Member Horbacz commented that there needs to be good communication from both sides and the City needs to hold some responsibility to ensure they are listening to the concerns of the Bucks. He said he respects Ms. Gardner's interpretation of the events.

Council Member Jennings remarked that he supports the Superintendent completely because he has heard there was "borderline almost assault" of the staff by the players, and he thinks it has been a problematic relationship.

Council Member Macaluso said she is frustrated that she did not hear of any incidents all summer long. She stated that she would like to speak to both sides.

Council Member Walczyk noted there is time to resolve the issues before the contract needs to be negotiated again.

Mayor Butler indicated he did meet with the General Manager of the team and his questions and concerns were discussed at length. He noted attendance was low, there were no programs and he heard complaints that the concession stand was unattended at times.

Mayor Butler, Council Member Jennings and Council Member Horbacz agreed the City needs to go in a different direction.

NYSDOH Drinking Water Fluoridation Contract

Mayor Butler summarized the report and Council concurred that a resolution should be prepared for the next meeting.

NYS Retirement System 2018 Employer Contribution Rates

Mayor Butler said this report gives the public an idea on how the City pays for an employee's retirement. He listed various examples from the chart of the percentages showing the cost has gone up

and said it shows another challenge that the City faces when revenue is flat and the tax levy is less than it was several years ago.

NEW BUSINESS

9th Ward Playground

In response to Council Member Horbacz's request for an update, Mr. Lumbis said the equipment has not arrived yet.

Rental Registration and Inspection Program

Council Member Horbacz noted there were many concerns expressed tonight from both sides that are legitimate. Noting the neighborhoods are declining with blight and deterioration, he said something needs to be done. He suggested using the Fire Department for visual inspections as they had done in the past, understanding this can tie into Council's wishes to decrease the size of the Fire Department. He pointed out that Code Enforcement is currently understaffed but the City cannot afford more staff due to budget constraints. He urged his colleagues, the City Manager, the Fire Chief and Code Enforcement Superintendent McWayne to support putting the firefighters back on the street to do exterior visual inspections of these homes, regardless of how big they think the department should be or what role they should be playing.

Council Member Jennings thanked everyone for coming to provide testimony at the public hearing and said Council will consider this in refining the proposal. Mentioning that someone talked about neighborhood improvement versus housing safety, he pointed out that this program is about housing safety but a byproduct of implementing it will be neighborhood improvement. He added this was proven after surveying other cities' data. Regarding fees, he said the proposal includes application fees but Council is not supportive of having a fee and noted that fees are dealt with under separate resolutions.

Council Member Macaluso noted that the fire inspections will not be coordinated with interior inspections. Regarding the pictures that were submitted, she advised that individuals should be calling Code Enforcement. She said she is in favor of rental registration but is not in favor of interior inspections, adding that the City already knows who the bad landlords are. Stressing that the tenants need to take some responsibility, she suggested that maybe the public is not aware that they should be calling Codes when there are issues. She advised there should be better education for tenants in addition to letting the landlords know what the City expects the rental units to be like. Regarding Mr. Doldo's comments, she stressed the City has no interest in spending thousands of dollars tearing down bad houses because they want the houses to look nice in the community.

Mentioning Mr. Beasley's comments, Council Member Walczyk commented it would a "reactive proactive" registration which will track bad landlords and put them under a "magnifying glass."

Council Member Jennings stated that is already done under the current system, stating the City already knows about repeat violators.

Council Member Walczyk questioned the certification process for property managers, mentioning Mr. Henry-Wilkinson's comments.

Attorney Slye explained that is governed by Article 12a of the Real Property Law, which is a matter of State law, and that law is not being changed by anything being proposed within this local law. He stressed that each case is fact specific so he does not want to make a general statement in that regard.

Council Member Walczyk questioned how much staffing would be needed for this program.

Council Member Jennings replied that after surveying other cities, five did not add staff and just changed the way they did their work and four did add staff minimally. He explained that almost all moved to making their systems electronic, which the City is currently in the midst of looking at and the Code Enforcement Superintendent has wanted to do that for some time. He added there is a current grant opportunity pending that could help with that. He pointed out that the implementation is not for a year so there is time to get through a budget cycle to determine what is needed to make that office more efficient. He stressed that not all the units are inspected in the first year and they are laddered over three to five years so it is manageable. In addition, he explained that by doing proactive inspection, the complaints decrease so there is a shift in the work duties.

Council Member Walczyk questioned the legislative intent listed in the local law and asked what Council Member Jennings' goal is.

Council Member Jennings replied this is about safety and there is difficulty tracking down landlords. He said there is a problem within the City with housing, noting the City is highly rental. He stated there is very visual decline and substandard housing and much of it is occupied and rented. He reiterated this program is about housing safety and the byproduct of improving the neighborhoods, which is evident in every city that has passed this before Watertown.

Council Member Walczyk and Council Member Jennings discussed their impressions of how this worked in other cities, as well as the costs that would affect the budget and whether the other cities charged fees.

Council Member Jennings clarified that he is not opposed to fees but some of his colleagues are.

Council Member Walczyk argued the burden of the cost will go on the taxpayers to fix a problem that Council Member Jennings' sees as a landlord and tenant relationship.

Council Member Macaluso said she decided not to charge a fee and suggested voluntary inspections in which the City can publish a list of inspected units to help landlords rent their units easier.

Council Member Horbach suggested if a \$10 fee were charged and there are 7,500 units in the City, then it would generate \$75,000, which would pay for one staff member. He added this would equate to less than \$1 per month that the landlords would have to raise their rent by.

Noting he has rented many places within the City, Council Member Walczyk said some were not nice, but he rented them because they were cheap and he does not require a lot. He remarked it is a contract between him and his landlord so he does not need the government knocking on his door telling him they are there to help. He added there are a lot of people in the community that do not make very much money, and he does not know where they are going to live if the City does not have places that are cheap

to rent. Stating he sees the problem with blight and vacant houses, Council Member Walczyk said he is concerned this program may worsen this if absentee landlords end up evicting tenants and boarding up the property because Codes are giving them a hard time. He noted the NDC program and the work done through CDBG are good options. He offered the following suggestions to address the problem: strengthening Codes to be more proactive, utilizing the Fire Department to find code violations that can be seen from the street, identifying zombie homes, investigating the NY landbank program, implementing a “fix-it-up exemption” program, offering deconstruction of a home through Habitat for Humanity, offering a “split-a-lot” program and investigating receivership laws.

Attorney Slye said he is not aware of a receivership being used in the circumstance that Council Member Walczyk described. He clarified a receiver is typically someone appointed by the court and usually to operate a business until such time that it gets on its feet. He offered the example of the Ultimate Goal being operated by Don Coon as the receiver for Watertown Savings Bank until such time that it could be sold. He clarified that typically the City does not want to own property.

Mayor Butler mentioned Mr. Doldo’s comments, and he indicated this process rarely is sped up because if taxes are not paid, then it is a three year process before the City can take the property. He stressed when people continue to pay taxes on abandoned or deplorable homes, the City does not have a lot of recourse. He noted this legislation does give the City a little more recourse though. Regarding Ms. Plante being against government intervention, he noted that in her later comments she asked the City to intervene and take care of the bed bugs, which is a contradiction. In terms of potentially displacing people, Mayor Butler said there are people living in some apartments in which they should not be allowed to live in, so worrying about potentially displacing them and continuing to do business as usual is not the answer. He pointed out the City should be worried about finding these people a new place to live because they are living in an unsafe environment. He commented that he supports the program in general but he does not support all of it, such as the fees. He clarified no fees are currently proposed. He further discussed the current conditions of some of the neighborhoods and noted the way the City has been doing business is not working, so it is time to look at approaching this problem from a different angle. Lastly, he said the City could be more proactive with Codes and at the least the properties should be maintained for safety standards.

Drone Registration

Council Member Walczyk asked the City Manager if she heard anything back from the FAA regarding the drone registration list.

Ms. Addison replied the City Attorney will be addressing that concern.

City Bus Advertising

Council Member Walczyk said he would like Council to consider farming out the advertising on the City buses, mentioning Lamar as the company that provides this service for Centro.

Mayor Butler noted that this company will receive half of the revenue and the City receives 100% of it now even though City staff has to do the work. He asked for a staff report to Council looking at the potential advantages and revenue over the past few years.

Vanduzee Property

Council Member Walczyk asked if there was a plan for this property.

Ms. Addison said she is following up on the intent of Council from the last Council meeting, which was to maintain a trail excess, reparcel the property and get a real property assessed value.

Council Member Jennings mentioned the Local Waterfront Development grant opportunity is part of this as well.

Thompson Park Pool

Council Member Walczyk asked for an update on Thompson Park Pool.

Ms. Addison stated there was none.

Bravo Italiana Festival

Mayor Butler commented that this was a great event held last weekend.

Potholes on Bellew Avenue

Mayor Butler asked if the potholes on Bellew Avenue could be looked at.

NY Airbrake Cleanup

Mayor Butler reported he and the City Manager met with the DEC and they were invited to do a presentation at the second meeting in October. He advised the cleanup is ongoing but should be done by the end of October.

October Work Session

Council Member Macaluso requested the meeting start at 5:30 p.m. due to the speaker coming from out of town.

Council agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 10:09 p.m. by motion of Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso, seconded by Council Member Stephen A. Jennings and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders

City Clerk